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C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 001604

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/02/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [AG](#)

SUBJECT: NEW ALGERIAN MFA SECRETARY GENERAL BIO INFORMATION

Classified By: Ambassador Richard W. Erdman,  
reasons 1.4(b)(d).

#### SUMMARY

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1. (C) On July 23, Ambassador Ramdane Lamamra was named as the new MFA Secretary General, replacing Hocine Maghlaoui. Lamamra began his career in 1976 and his notable tours include posts as Algerian Ambassador to the UN, Ambassador to the U.S. and most recently Ambassador to Portugal. Lamamra appears to have close connections with the upper echelons of the GOA, including President Bouteflika, Prime Minister Ouyahia, and Foreign Minister Bedjaoui.

#### LAMAMRA BACKGROUND

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2. (U) Lamamra was born on June 15, 1952 in Amizour, Bejaia, Algeria. He graduated in 1976 from the Diplomatic Section, "Ecole Nationale d'Administration." His varied career included diplomatic training at the Algerian Embassy in Moscow, Third Secretary in the MFA, Second Secretary in the MFA Legal and Consular Department, United Nations Political Affairs desk officer, First Secretary and Counselor in charge of Legal Affairs at Algeria's Permanent Mission to the United Nations, Adviser to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Deputy Director for the United Nations and Disarmament Affairs, Director of the Press and Information Department and Spokesman of the MFA.

3. (U) Lamamra has extensive United Nations experience. He served as a member of multiple Algerian delegations to the UN (1979-1990) and then Algeria's Permanent Representative to the UN (1993-1996). Lamamra has also served as Algerian representative to many international organizations. He was a member of the Algerian delegation to the Law of the Sea Conferences, Organization of African Unity, the Arab League, the Islamic Conference, OPEC, and head of delegations to OAU Ministerial Conferences.

4. (U) His most recent posts of note have been Ambassador to the United States (1996-1999), Ambassador/Counselor at the MFA (2000-2003), and just prior to accepting the MFA Secretary General posting, Ambassador to Portugal. Lamamra

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has also been Ambassador to Ethiopia (1989-1991) and Austria (1992-1993). He speaks fluent Arabic, French and English.

#### COMMENT

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5. (C) Lamamra left a very favorable impression during Ambassador's July 31 introductory call -- the Secretary General's first outside meeting following his installation the afternoon before. He came across as quick, smart, pragmatic, and flexible, with little of the ideological baggage that weighs down some of his Old Guard colleagues in the Ministry. Lamamra also came across as both familiar with and favorably inclined toward the U.S., having emphasized that it was "fitting" his first official meeting was with the U.S. ambassador and that he wanted to see visible signs of a U.S. investment presence -- like McDonalds -- along the streets of Algiers and other Algerian cities. Lamamra is clearly close to FM Bedjaoui, is said by contacts to have personal ties with PM Ouyahia, and, judging by the fact that he accompanied President Bouteflika to his November 2001 meeting with President Bush in Washington, has direct ties to Bouteflika as well. These personal connections to the highest echelons of government should make Lamamra an interesting and authoritative interlocutor, and hopefully one who is open and confident enough to consider ideas and shape, rather than merely implement, policy.

ERDMAN